

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 ACDA-19 INRE-00 USSS-00

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SS-20 OPR-02 A-01 SY-10 OC-06 CCO-00 DRC-01 /163 W

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FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4121

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 3248

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS/ PFOR MOPS EG PINT

SUBJECT: PSYCHOLOGICAL SITUATION CAIRO BAIRAM 1973

SUMMARY: EDUCATED EGYPTIANS CURRENTLY BELIEVE EGYPT HAS ACHIEVED VICTORY, ALBEIT TARNISHED, AND THERE IS NO APPARENT LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP. OPINION COULD CHANGE, IF CERTAIN SERIOUS MILITARY REVERSES, SUCH AS DESTRUCTION OR SURRENDER OF THIRD ARMY, TAKES PLACE. BITTERNESS AND DISTRUST TOWARD US ROLE IN ME WAR GROWING EACH DAY. EDITORIAL CRITICISM OF US HAS STEPPED UP IN PAST THREE DAYS.

1. UNIVERSITY-EDUCATED CAIRENES, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR, HELD THE NEAR-UNANIMOUS BELIEF THAT EGYPT HAD ACHIEVED A NECESSARY AND IMPOSING MILITARY VICTORY.

ABOUT FIVE DAYS AGO, WHEN IMPRESSION OF SIZE AND SUCCESS

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OF ISRAELI MILITARY FORCE WEST OF CANAL SLOWLY BECAME

KNOWN, OPINION SHIFTED SOMEWHAT. THE EDUCATED EGYPTIAN CONTINUOUSLY SAYS AND PROBABLY BELIEVES EGYPT'S VICTORY IS TARNISHED BUT A VICTORY NONETHELESS. HE WILL PROBABLY HOLD THIS BELIEF IF A CEASEFIRE BECOME EFFECTIVE ACCORDING TO THE SC RESOLUTIONS. HE WOULD ONLY BEGIN TO THINK DEFEAT IF EGYPT SUFFERED ONE OF SEVERAL POSSIBLE SERIOUS REVERSES (I.E., FALL OF SUEZ CITY OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT POPULATION CENTERS, SURRENDER OR DESTRUCTION OF THIRD ARMY, BOMBING OF CAIRO).

2. REACTION AMONG EDUCATED EGYPTIANS TO INFORMATION (ALBEIT CONFUSED AND SOMETIMES LACKING CREDIBILITY) ABOUT THE ISRAELI FORCE WEST OF CANAL HAS SHIFTED FROM ONE OF AMAZEMENT AND DISBELIEF TO ONE OF SOMBERNESS AS THEY RELUCTANTLY SPECULATE WHETHER VICTORY WILL BE TAKEN FROM THEM AND WONDER IF ISRAEL WILL MAKE FURTHER MILITARY GAINS BEFORE CEASEFIRE BECOMES A REALITY.

3. QUESTIONS INDICATING FRUSTRATION AND DISSATISFACTION WITH THE AMBIGUOUS AND INCREASINGLY NEGATIVE MILITARY SITUATION ABOUND: "WHY WAS THE CEASEFIRE ACCEPTED SO QUICKLY?...WE SHOULD HAVE INSISTED ON UN PEACE OBSERVERS BEING IN PLACE BEFORE CEASEFIRE CAME INTO EFFECT." "WHY DID THE ARMY STOP AND DIG IN, IN THE SINAI, AFTER THE FIRST TWO DAYS? THEY SHOULD HAVE GONE ALL THE WAY WHEN THEY HAD THE INITIATIVE." "THE ARMY SHOULD HAVE GONE TO THE MITLA PASS INSTEAD OF STRINGING ITSELF OUT IN THE OPEN DESERT." "HOW COULD THE ARMY HAVE LEFT THE GREAT BITTER LAKE UNDEFENDED?" "WHY DOESN'T THE REST OF THE ARMY JOIN IN NOW? WE CAN'T REALLY BE DOWN TO THE HOME GUARD."

4. DESPITE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS OF THIS NATURE THERE IS LITTLE INDICATION YET OF LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FIGHTING ABILITY OF THE ARMY OR THE SUFFICIENCY AND QUALITY OF IT WEAPONS. QUESTIONS USUALLY INDICATE DISAGREEMENT AND DISSATISFACTION WITH CERTAIN MILITARY DECISIONS. BUT, AS YET, PEOPLE SEEM NOT TO BE WILLING TO FIX BLAME ON ANYONE FOR THE DECISIONS THEY CONSIDER QUESTIONABLE. THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND AND

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PRESIDENT SADAT COULD BECOME THE SCAPEGOATS, BUT THEIR IMAGE HAS BEEN SO EXALTED IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS THAT THE PUBLIC IS, AT THE MOMENT, RELUCTANT TO TURN ON THEM, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE THE IT DOES NOT ASSESS THE WAR AS A DEFEAT. HOWEVER, SADAT, THE VICTOR IN WAR, IS FACED WITH A POTENTIAL "I TOLD YOU SO" CHALLENGE FROM SEVERAL POSSIBLE QUARTERS, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH IS THE ARMY. IF THE AMBIGUOUS CONTINUING WARFARE/

CEASEFIRE SITUATION IS PROLONGED...IF EGYPT SUFFERS A COMBINATION OF MILITARY REVERSES MENTIONED EARLIER IN THIS TELEGRAM...IF THERE IS NO MOVEMENT AT THE UN TO IMPLEMENT A PEACE RESOLUTION SERVING EGYPT'S INTERESTS, PRESIDENT SADAT'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP POSITION COULD BE IN QUESTION. EGYPTIANS COULD FAULT THEIR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IF THEY SEE THEIR "MILITARY VICTORY" STOLEN FROM THEM THROUGH DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERING AFTER SACRIFICING LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG MEN.

5. THE SOVIETS TOO ARE POTENTIAL SCAPEGOATS, IF THE POLITICAL SITUATION DETERIORATES. THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE CAPITALIZING SOMEWHAT ON THEIR ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS. TODAY EGYPTIAN PRESS TRIED TO IMPRESS READING PUBLIC WITH ALLEGED SOVIET READINESS TO SEND PEACEKEEPING TROOPS TO THE ME AT RISK OF NUCLEAR WARFARE. HOWEVER, THE LEVEL AND AIMS OF SOVIET ASSISTANCE IS COMING INTO GREATER QUESTION IN MORE POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED CIRCLES. THERE APPEARS TO BE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ABOUT WILLINGNESS OF SOVIET UNION TO HELP EGYPT THROW IDF OFF WEST BANK OF CANAL; THIS HAS, MOREOVER, LED TO QUESTIONS ABOUT SOVIET MOTIVES IN NOT SENDING FORCES TO EGYPT TO COUNTER AN INCREASINGLY THREATENING ISRAELI POSITION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAIRO 3248

6. THE US IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING THE SCAPEGOAT FOR THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY REVERSES THAT ARE KNOWN TO THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC. BITTERNESS AND DISTRUST TOWARD THE US IS GROWING EACH DAY BECAUSE OF THE INCREASING "EVIDENCE" THAT US IS GIVING "ALL-OUT SUPPORT OF ISRAEL." THE PRESS HAS BEEN UNEMOTIONAL BUT THOROUGH IN DEALING WITH US SUPPORT TO ISRAEL. THE READING PUBLIC HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO DETAILED REPORTING ON: CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATIONS OF \$2 MILLION IN EMERGENCY AID TO ISRAEL, UNSTINTING US MILITARY RESUPPLY, INCLUDING F-4'S, US CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL, ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF US VOLUNTEERS AND PILOTS, US RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT OVER ARAB TERRITORY, US REFUSAL TO SEND PEACEKEEPING FORCES TO ME, ETC. TODAY'S PRESS UNDERLINED "US TOTAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL" BY GIVING MAXIMUM PLAY TO THE US GLOBAL STRATEGIC ALERT STORY AND INTERPRETING IT AS PROOF THAT THE US WILL GO TO ANY EXTREME TO ASSIST ISRAEL IN GAINING
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VICTORY. EGYPTIAN EDITORIALS SINCE BEGINNING OF WAR GENERALLY REFRAINED FROM ATTACKING US DIRECTLY FOR ITS AID ISRAEL. BUT IN LAST THREE DAYS EDITORIAL CRITICISM OF US HAS STEPPED UP CONSIDERABLY. THIS CRITICISM HAS BEEN QUICKLY ECHOED BY UNIVERSITY EDUCATED EGYPTIANS AND THE READING PUBLIC IN GENERAL. THOSE WHO ARE BITTER FEEL US WAS PARTY TO ISRAELI DECEPTION OVER CEASEFIRE AND THAT US WANTS TO DEPRIVE EGYPT OF FULL VICTORY AND, IF POSSIBLE, TURN EGYPT'S VICTORY INTO DEFEAT. MANY DESPAIR OF THOUGHT THAT US CAN POSSIBLY BE IMPARTIAL IN FUTURE PEACE NEGOTIATION AND LOOK FOR ACTION, RATHER THAN WORDS, TO INDICATE THAT IT WANTS A JUST AND PEACEFUL ME SETTLEMENT.SMITH

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